



# Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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## SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENTS WIN ON FEES



**March for free education, London 4 November**

**Join Labour! Join Young Labour!**



## What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class has one weapon: solidarity.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for the labour movement to break with "social partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

### We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
- If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

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# For two states and reconciliation

By Dan Katz

**During October nine Israelis and 60 Palestinians — including 15 children — have died in violence connected to a spate of Palestinian knife and car attacks.**

The immediate reason for the spike in violence and renewed Palestinian street protests seems to have been rumours that Israel intended to change long-standing arrangements for worship at Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Provocatively, Israel's deputy foreign minister, Tzipi Hotovely, a member of the right-wing Likud party, said recently on television, "My dream is to see the Israeli flag flying over the Temple Mount ... It's the holiest place for the Jewish people."

The response of Israeli security forces has often been brutal. And since 14 October a large number of new checkpoints and concrete roadblocks have seriously

restricted the movement of the 300,000 Arab resident of East Jerusalem and surrounding Arab villages.

The Israeli state continues to take reprisals against the families of those suspected of attacks against Israelis. The Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem reports that, "On Tuesday 6 October 2015, Israeli security forces blew up two housing units in East Jerusalem and sealed another as collective punishment for attacks perpetrated by relatives of the people living in the three homes. The blasts also destroyed two adjacent apartments that were home to 11 people, including seven children."

Of course the underlying reason for Palestinian discontent and protests is an Occupation which is now in its 49th year. President of the Palestinian Authority and PLO leader Mahmoud Abbas comments that the violence is driven by "a feeling of disappointment in the young Palestinian generation, which basically

don't see any hope."

"Settlers in the West Bank go out among houses and villages, protected by the Israeli army, and commit killings and attacks against Palestinian nationals. These are the direct causes of the deterioration in the situation." Right-wing Israeli settlers have been responsible for a series of so-called "price-tag" revenge attacks on West Bank Palestinians.

The latest PSR opinion poll among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza strip shows widespread discontent, with two-thirds in favour of the resignation of President Mahmoud Abbas.

### FATAH

**Fatah, the major faction in the PLO continues to decline in support on the West Bank and Hamas's support is growing.**

If Abbas stood in a presidential election against Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, the poll suggests that Abbas would lose, 44-49%. The only Fatah candidate who would beat Haniyeh, according to the poll, is a leader of previous Palestinian uprisings, Marwan Barghouti, who is currently in an Israeli prison.

There is a clear majority of support for a new armed uprising — intifada — and a widespread belief that the PA is not doing enough to protect Palestinians from the violence of right-wing Israeli settlers. Hamas is for a new intifada; the PA says its lightly armed police

force is no match for Israeli tanks and opposes an uprising because it believes — reasonably enough — that it would make matters worse for the Palestinians, not better.

Marwan Barghouti states that, "Israel's actions and crimes not only destroy the two-state solution on 1967 borders and violate international law, they threaten to transform a solvable political conflict into a never-ending religious war that will undermine stability in a region already experiencing unprecedented turmoil." Barghouti is right that — irrespective of whether the Israelis manage to repress this current upsurge in violence in Jerusalem — unless the Palestinians are granted a viable state the conflict will become more religious, and even harder to solve. What the Israeli state will not be able to do is repress the Palestinians into unending silence.

However the right-wing Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu has shown no interest in coming to a reasonable agreement with the Palestinians. Speaking at a Parliamentary committee meeting last Monday Netanyahu commented, "We need to control all of the territory for the foreseeable future... I'm asked if we will forever live by the sword — yes."

**During the last election he promised that there would be no Palestinian state if he remained Prime Minister.**

## Netanyahu distorts history

**The Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has caused outrage by alleging that Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, played a central role in engineering the Holocaust, following his visit to Berlin in 1941 to meet with Adolf Hitler. Hussein was indeed bitterly hostile to Jews in Palestine, friendly to Hitler, and responsible for stoking a pogrom against Jews in Iraq. But responsible for the Holocaust? Netanyahu is trying to stoke hatred of Palestinians and should be condemned for a complete distortion of history. Not least because it serves to absolve Hitler and the Nazi government for their murder of millions of people during the Holocaust.**

# Strikes back on the menu in Belgium

By Ruah Carlyle

**Belgian trade unions are mobilising against ruling class plans to "do a Thatcher", cutting pensions and workers' rights, and removing the automatic link between inflation and wage increases.**

Following the election of a right-wing Flemish nationalist dominated government last year, Belgian trade unions — divided by political affiliation and linguistic groups — formed a common front and conducted a wave of national demonstrations and regional strikes culminating in a highly effective and well supported general strike on 15 December.

The trade union bureaucracy then entered into long and fruitless negotiations with government and bosses' representatives. Following the traditions of compromise in a multi-linguistic society, this delay was, initially, largely accepted by the rank and file and not seen for what it was — tactical stupidity.

The strike action lost momentum, the common front was broken (the Catholic CSC was in the negotiations more than others and won support for suspending action by 51-49%), and actions in the spring by the Socialist FGFB were poorly supported and ineffective.

It is with this background that the renewed action is all the more surprising and

hopeful. A demonstration in Brussels on 7 October, supported by all unions, was attended by 100,000. The Socialist FGFB has begun a series of regional strikes — the first, in Liege, being well supported.

A common front strike has been agreed for 23 November in Charleroi. It is for positive demands — the economic restructuring of the city in the interests of the population.

Media reporting has focused on peripheral negative events — violence on demonstrations and two deaths in hospitals because surgical doctors were delayed by pickets blockading motorways. In so far as such reporting leads anywhere, it is towards gaining

support for anti-trade union laws. The anti-strike phrases are lifted straight from the language of Thatcher in the miners' strike. Receiving very little coverage are the random attacks on pickets (basically people ramming strikers with their cars) and the organised attack by fascists on union offices during the last regional strike.

It remains to be seen whether the common front will resume nationally, but hopes are high.

**A collective response to the anti-trade union laws must come quick and fast to prevent them becoming an excuse for inaction by the right of the trade union movement.**



# Fee rise defeated

By Michael Tron

**The governing party of South Africa, the ANC, has been shaken by a powerful student movement, and has been forced to make significant concessions.**

Following running battles between #feesmustfall demonstrators and riot police in Cape Town and Pretoria, the ANC announced a freeze on tuition fees for 2016. With inflation running at regularly high rates of around 5% this will represent a real terms cut in tuition fees.

This concession has not stopped the protests and many campuses remain shut, with students demanding a fully-funded free education system.

This is not a flash in the pan movement. The South African Students' Congress involved in organising many of the protests can look back on a history of disruption over accommodation and National Student Financial Aid schemes.

The University of Limpopo, Mangosuthu University of Technology in

Durban, Tshwane University of Technology, University of the Witwatersrand, Vaal University of Technology, Walter Sisulu University of Technology, False Bay College and the College of Cape Town have all had repeated protests and shut downs since 2004, escalating in recent years.

The student movement sits right on top of a demographic and socio-economic time-bomb in South African society. The post-apartheid generation have faced youth unemployment double that of the national average, (around 50%).

At the same time education still bears the hallmarks of its apartheid legacy. According to the national census of 2011, among the South African population, 35.2% of black/ African, 32.6% of coloured, 61.6% of Indians/ Asian and 76% of white citizens have completed education to high school level or higher. They blame the rampantly corrupt ANC for this state of affairs, and consequently the 20-29 age group is more likely to have taken part in violent protests against the ANC than have voted for

them.

Meanwhile the ANC faces an older generation which is increasingly turning to militant trade union activity: the 2012 Marikana miners' strike, which led to shootings of striking trade unionists, being the best known example.

As capitalist state managers, the ANC are facing a growing squeeze. On the one hand the betrayals and lack of economic progress since 1994 are increasingly accumulating in the minds of their once solid loyal base. At the same time they face an economy in peril of being downgraded or tipping into recession.

As in the UK they face demands from their bankrollers for South Africa's equivalent to austerity and to reduce funding for higher education. Militant South African protests have always rattled the largely white bourgeois investor class who in the face of upheaval attempt to ensure their money is safe.

They are fundamentally opposed to any government moves which would see any higher taxes or wealth redistribution to pay for free



education and end inequality in the education system.

The freeze will leave a 2.6 billion rand hole in higher education finances. Already it seems some are trying to turn the student victory into opportunity, demanding that the private sector be allowed to fill the gap. The students face a hard struggle ahead and can expect many left-right zigzags from a government attempting to please the rich and shore up its haemorrhaging working class base. The fee freeze is a significant victory and is being rightly hailed as a major achievement in the face of arrests, police brutality and repression.

If the victory provides encouragement, the student movement could come back stronger to achieve its historic demand for free education.

**It has a better chance than ever, facing a government that is running out of room for manoeuvre.**

# Free Education: how will we win?

By Kelly Rogers

**The u-turn on South African tuition fees gives us reason to be in good spirits as the UK student movement mobilises and sets out its demands for a free, fully-funded, accessible education system.**

With the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC) national demonstration for free education and living grants on 4 November and the NUS-called student walk-out on 17 November, it's worth asking: how will we win?

When George Osborne's July budget scrapped maintenance grants for the poorest students, it was rightly said to be one of the most regressive policies in the budget. Maintenance grants are to be replaced with loans, hitting the poorest students hardest.

According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies "... students from the poorest backgrounds are now likely to leave university owing substantially more to the government than their better-off peers".

If Osborne is successful, then those who previously received full maintenance grants will leave university owing approximately £53,000, while richer students will owe £40,500.

For most of the students organising on their campuses for free education, this policy demonstrates what they already knew: free education is about more than just fees — although fees will certainly be one of the battlegrounds during this government.

For a long time both Tory politicians and Russell group universities have been making noises in favour of £16,000 plus per year uncapped tuition fees. As the students on 4 November will make clear, rising rents, bills and child-care costs, among other financial burdens, are as much a barrier to education as astronomical fees.

If we want our education system to be fair, free and equally accessible by all then Osborne's attack on maintenance grants is a central issue to be fighting over.

Recently University College London (UCL) paid £100,000 in compensation to

UCL student residents after a seven-month long rent strike.

Housing become a major political issue for people in the UK. Rents have soared across a lot of the country, living conditions have gone down, the private rental sector has boomed, and many people have to live in cramped and overcrowded conditions.

Likewise, universities are pushing up rents, outsourcing their accommodation, and adding to the financial plight for already struggling students. The victory won by students at UCL has vindicated a strategy of strikes and collective organisation, and should serve as a source of inspiration for students everywhere.

International students are racking up debts of upwards of £100,000 for studying in the UK, whilst many are subjected to surveillance and harassment, via racist "counter-extremism" programmes.

## MIGRANTS

**With students being deported part-way through their studies, often to dangerous situations in their home countries, the fight around open borders and equal rights for migrants has become key.**

Students and others recently travelled to Dover, in tandem with students from France and elsewhere making their way to Calais to demonstrate for open borders.

We cannot be truly calling for free education, unless it is free for all and free from discrimination and abuse.

Jeremy Corbyn had free education as a flagship policy for his election campaign, proposing free education at university level through the implementation of a 2.5% increase in corporation tax; he garnered a huge amount of support from young people both inside and outside of Labour.

Many young people are politicised and enthused by Corbyn's victory, and the Tories' determination to further decimate our education system.

**It is now our job to transform this situation into a bigger and stronger campaign for free education for all.**

# Giving new members confidence



**Merseyside Labour Left came out of the Corbyn campaign and has kept organising.**

At our next general meeting, I think we'll constitute ourselves as a Momentum group, although there's some discussion about how that'll work.

We have working groups which form left caucuses in each local Party. We have quite large caucuses in some constituencies, others where we have only a small group.

We've set up working groups for various things. One project is a local labour movement conference, to be held on 28 November. Another working group is organising social events.

The local labour movement conference will be a dayschool about local Labour issues, and broader issues like democratising the party.

We've had a training session about how Party struc-

tures work. We've been putting a few motions to parties. So far, it's been more to do with making sure that party structures are functioning. In Wallasey for example, we have passed policy to get affiliated supporters signed up as members.

One of my worries is that we wind up in endless meetings about Party process, and don't get onto talking about the kind of politics we want to raise in the party. I want to make sure we always discuss an item of policy — Trident, for example.

We hope to influence the way Momentum develops. We want the left caucuses to nail down what policy we want to propose.

**We want to give new members the confidence and support to know that if they are elected to office within their local Party, they have a network of support.**

Mark Easton

**On 21 October 50 Momentum supporters met in Nottingham to begin**



**Lewisham Momentum out on Saturday 24 October encouraging people to register to vote, as part of Labour's Democracy SOS campaign**

**the task of building the new Labour left wing movement in the city.**

The meeting was organised with the involvement of activists from six constituencies.

Nottingham councillor Steve Battlemuch spoke about the need to energise the Party to campaign against the Tories. Ashfield councillor Lauren Mitchell spoke on the hope that Corbyn's victory has brought into politics. Broxtowe activist Pete Radcliff spoke on the need for Momentum to act independently of the Party machine if necessary to draw activists into cam-

paigning and debate about the Party's future.

Momentum's "Ethics Code" was circulated around the meeting. The "code" clarifies that Momentum would need to be "committed to supporting the Labour Party winning elections". No argument was made to challenge that even though a few attendees did not support Labour electorally.

**It was agreed that a steering committee be established with reps from each constituency to plan further meetings and activities.**

Joan Trevor



# Growing up in the age of austerity

## How I became a socialist By Kelly Rogers



**Putting my finger on exactly when or how I became a socialist is far from easy.**

I grew up in a working class family. My dad was a printer, and he worked long weeks at the printing press, for many years rotating between day-shifts, late-shifts and night-shifts. He hated his job.

As I got older, I began to pay more attention and realised quite how exhausting and onerous the work he did was. When he was made redundant I was in my late teens, and was very aware that losing his sense of security and purpose was hugely damaging to his self-esteem and sense of self-worth.

I also grew up in quite a traditional family. My mum was a child-minder for most of my childhood. She worked from home for over a decade so that she could take me and my brothers to school, pick us up, make us our meals, spend time with us in the school holidays. Despite my mum working full weeks, not only looking after her own children, but lots of other children too, my dad was seen as the bread-winner. This was partly down to him being the higher wage-earner, and partly down to us questionably seeing his job as more laborious. The housework fell in its entirety onto my mum, and we all played a part in her exploitation.

But these experiences were not enough, by any means, to politicise me. I didn't become a socialist and a feminist because I grew up in a fury about the injustices I saw in my own family. It was just the way our family worked, and, as far as I knew, the way that every family worked. This was the way that all work was, for everybody. But every aspect of my political life has been coloured by those experiences.

When I started at Sixth Form College, at the age of 16, I began talking to people about politics proper. I began reading my first political texts, heatedly debating my peers and my family. By the time I arrived in university two years later, in Birmingham, I had been persuaded that not only was I left-wing, but that I had a duty to act upon it.

It was 2010, and the student movement was launching a fight against the hike in tuition fees. I joined a student group

called Against Fees and Cuts (later renamed Defend Education) which was to become my political home for the next four years. Within a few weeks of arriving at university I had been to my first national demonstration, occupied the administration building at my university, and been to countless political meetings — on education, on austerity, on Israel/Palestine, on the climate crisis.

From early 2011 I began to meet student activists and young socialists from around the country more frequently, and I joined the National Campaign Against Fees Cuts. With the encouragement of my comrades in Defend Education, I made speeches, I wrote articles, I proposed actions in our weekly meetings, and I gradually took up more and more responsibility. I was elected to the position of Women's Officer in my students' union, and sharpened my ideas around liberation, austerity and education.

### CUTS

**From 2012 I joined a local group in Birmingham, called Communities Against the Cuts.**

This group comprised a number of older comrades, from Socialist Resistance — by whom I was very influenced — and other groups. With them I organised campaigns against cuts to library services, the Bedroom Tax, and closures of walk-in centres, among others. I began to see myself as an activist in a broader sense, rather than just a student activist, and I learned lots more from people cutting across a number of generations.

In my fourth year at university I was suspended from university twice following protests for free education and better pay and working conditions for university staff. The second of these suspensions lasted nine months, and I began working full-time.

By this point, I had been talking extensively with people, including members of the UCU branch and organised socialists about trade unions and workplace organisation. I became a trade union rep at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, where I was working as a bartender. I began recruiting and agitating around the issues of a living wage, sick-pay, and decent contracts. Over 10 months we recruited the majority of the department to the union, won sick pay, a 10 per cent pay rise, and a guarantee that pay would be at least at the living wage



**Occupation of the Aston Webb building at the University of Birmingham university, November 2010**

from 2016. It was very exciting to see my workmates who were, frankly, baffled when I told them about my political exploits as a student, enthused by bread-and-butter politics in the workplace.

Putting my finger on exactly when or how I became a socialist is far from easy. It has been the result of innumerable people, from different political organisations and perspectives, from different generations and walks of life, taking the time to discuss, debate, share and organise with me.

It has been the result of growing up in the age of austerity; of relaxed conversations at the pub, heated and inspirational meetings, and big public blow-ups.

Whether I'm organising around work, around education, around austerity and cuts, around the closure of domestic violence centres or cuts to libraries, I'm doing so with the knowledge that young people in this country have it harder than our parents did, but that we should be striving for more than they were too.

My parents worked very hard, for very little, just like millions of other working class people in this country. We all deserve better, and should struggle for more.

**With that in mind, I am looking forward to many more years of organising alongside current and new comrades, encountering new ideas and perspectives.**

## Gentrification for all!

### Letters



**The capitalist housing market predominantly separates "nice" areas from "rough" areas.**

In the "nice" areas, people pay higher prices; bigger and posher houses and better shops and amenities and transport facilities are built.

In the "rough" areas, only cheap and poor-quality housing is built; shops, amenities, and transport remain poor. The social divide, once established, tends to grow.

But the market has cross-currents. Inner cities combine bits where rich people afford high prices to be near to city-centre facilities, and nearby bits where poor people can't afford not to pay for cramped and crumbling housing because they must be near city-centre job openings.

A poor inner-city area may be "turned round" initially by younger, childless, better-off people moving in because they value city-centre access enough not to mind cramped housing or seedy surroundings. That turnaround can spiral to turn a poor area into a rich one.

My argument (contested by Bruce Robinson, *Solidarity* 381) is not at all to endorse the market because of those cross-currents, still less to endorse the very existence of social inequalities! It is that we should not indict those cross-currents as the specially bad bit of market workings, and regard the main drift (keeping posh areas posh, and poor areas poor) as relatively benign.

Yes, we want democratic planning. That planning should aim for levelling up and for socially mixed areas, not for "gentry" to be gated out of "proletarian" areas and proletarians gated out of posh areas. For "gentrification" for all!

Both Bruce and I refer to Islington. As the Monopoly board shows, Islington was long a notoriously poor area. When Rivinghill School, near the Angel Islington, was shut down by the Inner London Education Authority in 1965 because the teachers refused to hit the students, a big reason for the authority's alarm was that the liberal experiment was being tried in such a "rough" area.

Now the Angel is as posh as Islington gets. But, despite what Bruce writes, you don't have to walk far even from the Angel to escape posh "uniformity". The old Rivinghill School, renamed Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, has a plebeian student population, over 90% from recent-migrant families. Islington Green school (renamed CoLA Islington), not many yards in the opposite direction from the Angel, is also plebeian.

Through long battles in the 1970s the Islington Labour Party became unusually lively and left-wing. Jeremy Corbyn's political career has been based on that.

The base of the left was mainly (though by no means all) incomers, while people like Michael O'Halloran and Bill Bayliss on the right cultivated a base among longer-time locals. There were snooty and posh people among the leftist incomers, but there was nothing progressive in O'Halloran's and Bayliss's defence of "proletarian" localism.

Ten or fifteen years ago, the Independent Working Class Association had some success (up to 27% of the vote) in



**Students at Rivinghill school protest the closure of their school in 1965**

Clerkenwell (where Bruce used to live), on a basis of resentment against newer incomers (mostly better-off workers rather than actual bourgeois). The IWCA were leftists of sorts, rather than Bayliss-type right-wingers, but addled, leading instinctive resentments into a blind alley.

**To repeat: the enemy is not better-off workers, or middle-class people, even snooty and annoying ones, and the answer is not to cordon off such people into homogeneously posh areas. The enemy is capital.**

*Martin Thomas, Islington*



# Labour: stop the expulsions!

A *Guardian* article of Friday 23 October, by the paper's political editor Patrick Wintour, continued the recent trend of red-baiting smear stories in the national press.

It "revealed" that Jennie Formby, National Political Officer of Unite, had asked questions about the expulsion from the Labour Party of four members or co-thinkers of Workers' Liberty — Vicki Morris, Liam McNulty, Daniel Randall, and Edward Maltby. Jennie asked why membership of Workers' Liberty should be a barrier to Labour Party membership, when Workers' Liberty is no longer registered as a separate political party with the electoral commission.

Wintour's clear purpose in writing the story (the details of which he was undoubtedly fed by a source in Labour's top ranks) was to perpetuate a narrative that the new surge in the Labour Party is based on "infiltration" by the "hard left", and to implicate Unite, the biggest union in the country and Labour's largest affiliate, in that "infiltration".

In fact, it is to Jennie Formby and Unite's credit that they will ask questions about the expulsion of socialists from Labour. It shows that they want their party, the party of the trade union movement, to be open, pluralistic, and democratic — and not to operate an internal regime of expulsions and proscriptions.

Why have Workers' Liberty members and even just suspected associates been expelled from Labour without charge or hearing? Notionally, it is because of "Clause 2.I.4.B" of the Labour constitution, which prohibits membership of, or even "support for", any "political organisation other than an official Labour Group or unit of the party."

## PROHIBIT

**But the rule is patently unenforceable if read literally, as it would prohibit support for any number of campaign groups, NGOs, and civil society organisations which are not "official Labour Groups". The expulsions are clearly politically-motivated and ideologically driven.**

Is it because we are revolutionaries, and Labour has only ever been a reformist, social-democratic party? Labour was founded to be the political expression of the industrial labour movement, and has always reflected the diversity of political opinion found within that movement. The new leadership wants to turn Labour outwards, and broaden the party; the party machine wants to narrow it down.

That so many of the media commentators on the developments in the Labour Party are able to see the situation only in terms of the "hard left", a political movement they obviously know almost nothing about, "infiltrating" Labour (a party that, in reality, many of them know only marginally more about), and not in terms of politically-motivated expulsions and exclusions, says much about them.

The language of "infiltration" implies surreptitiousness and manipulation; behind-the-scenes attempts to control and pull strings. The faction in Labour which has operated most consistently in this way is not the hard left, but the hard right. The Blairites never mobilised a grassroots activist movement, and never attempted to win over the mass of Labour Party members to their ideas in anything more than a superficial way, as the dismal showing of their candidate in the leadership election made abundantly clear. They relied on machine



politics, scheming, backroom deals, and patronage from the powerful. We have no interest in such an approach. We believe in open, democratic debate and discussion. We have never concealed our ideas, or soft-peddled them. We want what Jeremy Corbyn said on the Andrew Marr Show before Labour Party conference that he is fighting to build: "a big, open, democratic party." Labour must be a space where all those committed to electing a Labour government can work together towards that aim, while debating the policies, campaigns, and approaches necessary to achieve it, as well as how such a government should govern when elected.

In an appearance on BBC's 'Sunday Politics' recently, right-wing Labour MP Frank Field said that if, when constituency boundaries are redrawn, any Labour MPs are de-selected as a result of left-wing insurgencies in their constituencies, they should stand as "Independent Labour" candidates.

Field said that other moderate Labour MPs should campaign for them, and committed to do so himself: "I hope there will be a large group of MPs who, if their colleagues are unfairly treated, will encourage their colleagues to stand in by-elections as Independent Labour candidates. I know a large number of us, including myself, would go and campaign for them. It's a capital offence to campaign for somebody standing against an official Labour candidate, but if enough of us go, they can't pick all of us of and expel the lot."

Here, then, we have the quite remarkable spectacle of a sitting Labour MP explicitly advocating, on national television, electoral challenges to Labour, and committing himself to supporting them. Meanwhile, members or even suspected associates of socialist organisations which have explicitly ruled out such challenges, by de-registering with the Electoral Commission, are expelled from the party.

The expulsion of Workers' Liberty members are part of a wider tranche of expulsions of actual or presumed left-wingers within Labour, many of which were justified on outrageously spurious bases (for example, comments made years ago on social media which were deemed by the shadowy, unelected, unaccountable "Compliance Unit" to be at odds with "the aims and values of the Labour Party").

**The expulsions are symptoms of a party machine, largely as yet untransformed by the sweeping changes happening elsewhere in Labour, convulsively reacting in an attempt to preserve the status quo. It will not succeed.**

# Help us raise £15,000!

**On 21-22 November Workers' Liberty will be holding our annual conference.**

Our conference is an opportunity to orient ourselves, debate the way forward, and check our positions. We take these debates seriously and debate the documents not just on the conference floor but also in a series of regional meetings leading up to conference.

Our fundraising drive will be ending at conference, and the money we raise will help us in carrying out the tasks set out for us in conference documents. This year we have more conference documents than usual, reflecting the higher level of political activity around us and the areas of work we are involving ourselves in.

When we started our fundraising drive there was as yet no sign of the upswing in political activity that was to come. We aimed to raise £15,000. We have nearly reached that original target, but the new upswing makes a strong case for more.

Please consider:

- Getting a subscription to our weekly newspaper, *Solidarity* — [workersliberty.org/subscribe](http://workersliberty.org/subscribe)
- Taking out a monthly standing order.
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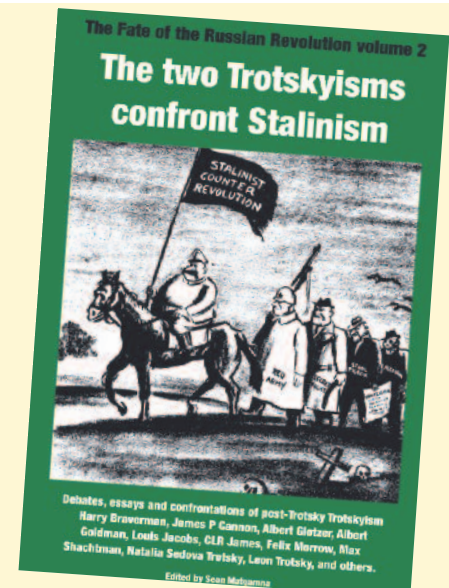
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# Canada: why the NDP crashed

By Herman Rosenfeld

**The Canadian federal election on 19 October sent the hardline right-wing government of Stephen Harper's Conservatives packing. They suffered a crushing defeat.**

That was the good news. But the big winner was the traditionally ruling-class favourite Liberals, Justin Trudeau, son of former Prime Minister the late Pierre Trudeau, now leads a huge and unexpected majority government. The social democratic New Democrats (NDP), finished a distant third, losing 17% of the seats it formerly held in the previous parliament, where it was the official opposition.

There were a number of factors that affected and shaped these results. Two-thirds of Canadian voters were sick and tired of the 10 years of Conservative rule (the last four of those, in a majority). The Harper Tory party was the result of a merger of the old Progressive Conservatives, that combined old-style fiscal conservatism, championing the neoliberal counter-revolution, and often socially progressive approaches, with a hard-line, radically right-wing and socially conservative group. Stephen Harper represented the latter, and steadily championed a regime of tax cuts, free trade deals, attacks on the working class and especially the trade union movement.

In the past few years, Harper waged an all out attack on democratic rights (anti-terror laws that threatened people's citizenship, limiting voting, using tax authorities to persecute critics), refused to take climate change seriously and attacked those who did, and backed oil and gas and extractive industry interests. He implemented serial attacks on the right to strike, racist demonisation of certain immigrant groups (especially Islamophobia, attacks on scientists, public media, and a new cold-war like foreign policy, etc. Along with this, were Nixonian/Thatcher-like vendettas against political enemies and critics that disgusted many people.

The Liberals were, for many years, the favoured party of Canada's ruling class. They had suffered a humiliating defeat in the 2011 election after a series of scandals.

## BUDGET

**But the new leader and the disaffection with Conservative rule helped to put wind in the sails of the party. Moreover, the Liberals began promising mild Keynesian state borrowing — challenging the balanced budget mantra of the Tories — in the name of increased spending on urban infrastructure.**

They argued that they would increase taxes on the wealthy and cut subsidies to the rich, in the name of cutting taxes "on the middle class".

The NDP is a mildly centrist social democratic party that has been steadily drifting further towards the centre in order to appear "responsible" to centrist voters and elements of the capitalist class. The NDP platform was more progressive than the other two parties in many ways, with calls to raise the federal minimum wage, a modest increase in corporate taxes, opposition to the anti-terror laws and questioning the free trade agreements, respecting the national rights of native peoples; as well as ending the attacks on the labour movement and public services.

Despite this, it notably refused to oppose Conservative "balanced budget" obsession and didn't distinguish itself on

international affairs. It refused to increase taxes on the wealthy, called for tax breaks to manufacturers that invested in jobs and inexplicably, small business. Its opposition to free trade is also rather half-hearted and conditional.

The NDP had made huge gains from its perennial third-party status in the 2011 election, and especially had gained a number of seats in the province of Quebec. In 2015, its leader, Tom Mulcair, had hopes of getting elected to government, possibly a minority. Even with its clear unwillingness to challenge the general neoliberal consensus (and its acceptance of the economic domination of capital and competitiveness), its possible win was seen as providing a potential, modest opening for more progressive social forces, including much of the labour movement.

Ultimately, the NDP blew its initial lead to the Liberals, because of a number of factors. The Liberals actually positioned themselves as being further to the left in a number of areas than the NDP. There was no real challenge to the underlying status quo of neoliberalism by the NDP (precarity, capital mobility, power of finance, etc). Then there was "strategic voting", the tendency of many voters to support whomever they think can best defeat the Conservatives. Once it became clear that the NDP had little new to offer, and that the Liberals might have the best chance to defeat the Conservatives, huge numbers of voters (including NDP supporters) moved to the Liberals.

The Liberals are traditionally said to "run elections from the left, but end up ruling from the right." This is most likely what will happen in its future government. The NDP, on the other hand, in the words of a popular progressive journalist, was hoist on its own petard of trying to appeal to mainstream bourgeois notions of what is acceptable. "Faced with a choice between the Liberals and a social democratic party posing as Liberals, voters opted for the real thing." This is what the NDP has become over the past 30 years.

The extent of the NDP setback shouldn't be underestimated. It lost all its seats in Canada's largest city, Toronto, and much of its faux base in Quebec. It went from 103 to 45 seats (in the 338-seat parliament). It had hopes of winning on the Federal level for the first time in Canadian history.

But before socialists around the world get upset, a number of things need to be emphasized. The NDP, like all of its social democratic sister parties around the world, has long lost any link to a fundamental challenge to the system or its latest form, neoliberalism. In its desperation to get elected, it is even willing to drop its historically modest reform agenda, let alone dare to adopt ambitious calls for structural reforms, such as moving off of fossil fuels, nationalizing the financial sector, massive investment in public transit, health care, and rejecting free trade and capital mobility.

**Change, in the short and medium term will come from building movements around key social and class struggles, and working to build a space for socialist politics.**

Party name	Elected seats	Popular vote	Change in seats
Liberals	184	39.5%	+42.7%
Conservatives	99	31.9%	-22.3%
NDP	44	19.7%	-17.8%
Bloc Québécois	10	4.7%	+2.4%
Green	1	3.5%	-0.3%
Other		0.8%	-4.5%



Justin Trudeau, leader of the Liberal Party of Canada and prime minister-designate

# After Syriza's b

**Panagiotis Morakis, a former member of Syriza Youth's Central Committee, spoke to Daniel Lemberger Cooper**

**I met Panagiotis Morakis on a quiet Sunday afternoon in a cafe near Syntagma Square in Athens shortly before Greece's September election. He is 28 years old, was born in Athens and is currently unemployed. He left Syriza in late August to join the new radical left group, Popular Unity.**

Whilst we discussed for over two hours many of his friends passed by and said hello. This included Mariza, a young feminist comrade from Syriza Youth, who was to stand for Popular Unity in the 20 September elections. Morakis, like thousands of young people in Greece, has been at the sharp end of the crisis. He tells me that most of his friends work "illegally" in precarious work, for less than the minimum wage, or without national insurance contributions. He described the high levels of mental health problems amongst the young.

For Morakis, what is most painful is that, without political change, he could see no future for his generation.

**DLC: Prior to the election of Syriza in January 2015, what was going on in Syriza youth?**

**PM:** After Syriza came second in the elections of 2012, there was a necessity to form a single party. This meant the many disparate youth sections became a single youth section.

In December 2013 Syriza Youth was established at a conference. It was one member, one vote. It was democratic, and always on the left of the Party.

There were three major factions in Syriza Youth. Firstly, there was "Anasynthesis", which made up 48%: it was broadly euro-communist (that is, broadly against Stalinist practices) and mainly made up of Synaspismos members. Its main focus was with "liberation" matters: feminism, LGBT rights and so on.

They believed that you can overcome capitalism by way of creating a model society. For example, you may create a small business without bosses — this would act as an example for society to change. At this time it was opposed to exit from the Eurozone, although this later changed.

Secondly, there was the "Left Movement". They are close and loyal to the leadership, and made up about 35%.

Lastly, there was the Left Platform's youth faction, which made up 17%. In this faction, Left Stream and DEA were the major organisations.

Syriza Youth had local committees in neighbourhoods and in universities. They were separate from the local groupings of the party. There was a lively democratic life: there were regular debates and votes at a local, regional and national level. There was a central committee of 71 people, of which I was a member; and also a committee of 15 above this that ran the work of the section, of which I was also a member.

**DLC: If, hypothetically, I was a left-wing member of Syriza youth in late 2014, I would encourage debate and discussion about what Syriza should do in government, and encourage planning on the role of the youth section once Syriza forms a government. Did such discussions take place?**

**PM:** Prior to the election there was a shutting down of democracy which affected all members of Syriza. For example, the public documents and decisions of Syriza were not being followed by the leadership. The entirety of the youth section criticised this, as did every faction. But because we were independent we were largely unaffected.

At this time some people — mainly the Left Movement and some from Anasynthesis — who were saying that we must form a government at any cost. They did not foresee that anything like what has happened later.

**DLC: What were the Left Platform faction in the youth arguing for?**

**PM:** We said that it does not matter what the leading team in Syriza wants to do, it is about what can be done. We argued that it was not possible to do things inside the Eurozone; we would be trapped. We also argued for our programmatic demands to cut the debt, to nationalise the banks and so on.



# betrayal, the international road to socialism?

Whilst we were doing this we were working together even if we had our differences. We all believed that this party, if elected, would make a difference.

## **DLC: 25 January 2015, Syriza is elected: what was happening in Syriza Youth?**

PM: It was something strange. Up to the referendum, there were protests backing the government. This was something I had never seen. Of course we were participating in this and continuing to argue for our politics.

There was the deal of 20 February, in which it was decided the government could not act without permission from the eurozone. Some of Syriza's youth thought that Tspiras was doing his best, and that Syriza would still succeed. They believed that they couldn't kick us out of the eurozone without damage, and that we had the upper hand. That we could find a mutually beneficial agreement. They didn't see what the 20 February agreement signified.

## **DLC: Was there an attempt to shift the policy of Syriza youth to put pressure on the government at that point to change course?**

PM: Yes, there were debates in the central committee. We were meeting every two months. The Left Platform were arguing that Syriza had to have an alternative plan in case something went wrong. Moreover, we have to prepare the people for alternatives. We were also concerned that some promised improvements, such as an increase in the minimum wage, were not forthcoming.

In May 2015 we decided that we would have a second youth conference in July.

In June 2015, our Syriza Youth Central Committee sent a resolution to the Central Committee of Syriza stating our opposition to its plans; we said the party had to prepare plans to exit the eurozone. This was pushed for by Anasynthesis and Left Platform comrades.

However, since 2012, a result of the decline in democracy in Syriza, the leadership did not care about what the youth were saying. Syriza Youth was said to be "silly kids", saying "lefty" stuff, and so on.

## **DLC: And now?**

PM: Syriza Youth supported the referendum with all its powers. We succeeded in a way: 75% of the youth voted "oxi" — this was a significant victory. We were delighted but also scared. We understood that this may lead to leaving the eurozone. But the "agreement" that would later lead to the third memorandum was reached in Brussels a week or so later.

We held the last Central Committee of Syriza Youth after the agreement. At this committee meeting there was shock and disbelief that the agreement had been signed.

There was a debate about when to have a party conference — before the third memorandum was to be signed, or after. People arguing for the latter said we had lost and should decide what to do next. People said that Greece might sign the third memorandum, but we can start to make an alternative plan to evade it.

As a Left Platform we were arguing for a party conference immediately before the memorandum was signed. Unfortunately Anasynthesis and Left Movement won the debate. They argued that whilst we should not support the third memorandum, we should go to a conference after the memorandum was signed.

This was the first time that the Syriza Youth section collectively said that we should start making plans to exit the eurozone, even if the government sign. As a Left Platform we were pleased with this, but unhappy that we did not have an immediate conference. This was a mistake in our view: there was no clear instruction to Syriza MPs about what they should do in Parliament as regards the vote for or against the memorandum. Some MPs voted Yes, some voted No.

[A party conference was finally called (after the signing of the memorandum) and then was cancelled.]

Most of Left Platform anticipated that something like this would happen. However, the other two factions, who had supported the initiative of going to a conference in September felt betrayed. They felt that Tspiras had signed this memorandum; that he had agreed to a conference to discuss the future of the party; and then, without asking anyone, and against the wishes of the Central Committee, there were



**75% of the youth voted 'oxi' in the Greek referendum in July, rejecting a bailout deal**

going to be elections. This was a breaking point for most in Syriza Youth.

The Left Platform at this time wasn't sure even if it would leave Syriza as there was going to be a conference. As elections were called, we decided to leave Syriza and form Popular Unity (PU).

For a long time the other Syriza Youth factions weren't sure what to do.

I, alongside seven other Syriza Youth Central Committee members, left Syriza on 25 August. Those who remained tried to have a Central Committee but they couldn't reach quoracy for the meeting.

On 27 August another 37 members of the Central Committee decided to leave Syriza. This was a combination of Left Stream and DEA members, most of who will join PU. Of the Anasynthesis members that have left, most are part of that 37. Some intend to have their own conference. Some will also join PU.

## **DLC: In Syriza Youth's leaving statement they touch on reassessing their stance on the eurozone and EU as bastions of neoliberalism; they definitely place their emphasis on European and internationalist solidarity.**

They seem to implicitly criticise the Popular Unity for advocating an elusive national road to socialism, for being confined to the parliamentary road and not placing enough emphasis on dual power and structures and formations from below, from the rank and files.

For being a recooked Syriza without sharp working-class politics, for being confined within capitalism and trying to use outdated tools of currency and devaluing currency to get out of the crisis; of placing emphasis on restructuring of production and productivity.

An extract: "We think that because nothing will be given to us, society must be able to claim everything and therefore we place emphasis on the forms of social organisation and the organisation of power from below. It is with this thought path that we conceive the break with the eurozone and the EU with a left, radical sign which simultaneously becomes a

means to unfold an internationalist strategy by European working classes, far from any sense of national retrenchment or exit from the crisis through 'competitiveness'. We believe that the social democratic demands and benefit programmes and exacerbated productivity are outdated."

PM: It is criticism made of PU and was criticism of the Left Platform of Syriza. How do I respond to this? I think there is no way to have "national" socialism in a country surrounded by capitalist countries; I don't think that [a change of] currency itself will change things. Returning to the national currency could be chosen by a right-wing government. What we say as PU is stop austerity and end the memorandum — this is the way to have jobs, to have public education. There could be a development in the agricultural system. Greece has a rich agriculture, but due to European Union rules some of it is left behind. We need to try to use agriculture as a means to increase jobs.

In order for this to happen we will have to leave the Eurozone. Because the Eurozone is not just a currency, it is a set of free market policies and economic rules that, if you are in the eurozone, you have to obey. We don't think that returning to the drachma will magically solve things. We have our programme. We say that if you want that to become a reality then you have to return to the national currency.

There have been many countries that have done things that we support, like Venezuela. Producing something and selling it in order to buy something does not antagonise the other working classes. The best thing for other European working-classes would be to witness a country fighting capitalism and to win, to see that another way of running society is possible. Let [our fight] be a good example.

PU is a coalition of left parties; and in working together we should not think there is an absolute truth. That way belong to the past. I think that having different opinions is worthwhile. Therefore while I disagree with the criticism of PU's strategy, I don't see it will lead us down different roads.

**I think debate is needed for PU. I have encouraged people to come to PU to debate.**



# After Corbyn: making socialist politics a decisive force

On 21-22 November Workers' Liberty will be holding our annual conference. This document about the Labour Party and the Corbyn surge will be one of those discussed.

**After decades of capitalist triumphalism and the decay of the left, the movement which carried Jeremy Corbyn to victory brings great openings and opportunities for socialists, potentially very great.**

But we have not yet emerged from the old period; that is the task to be accomplished. We need to:

- Organise the newcomers into active CLPs, Young Labour groups, local left caucuses, etc.
- Fight for democracy and for an active political life at every level of the party and labour movement.
- At the same time, patiently explain class-struggle and socialist political ideas, shifting the debate, making new socialists and winning new support.

The progress of socialist education and organisation will also be vitally important for the fate and development of the broader movement. Either the "Corbyn surge" will be consolidated by building an active and democratic mass Labour Party and reviving working-class politics, or it will end with a backlash driven by the Labour right. Either we will to some significant extent win the battle of ideas in this movement, or it will go down, one way or another. We can do that only if we convince many more people of class-struggle socialist politics and rally significant numbers of them — and of those previously vaguely and passively sympathetic — into active fighters for the politics of working-class self-emancipation.

During the Blair years, the Labour Party remained in general terms what we have called a "bourgeois workers' party", due largely to its institutional link with the unions.

Within that formula, there was a very significant shift towards the bourgeois "pole", as the Blairites reshaped the party structure, the party's self-conscious working-class membership and supporter base attenuated, and the unions allowed themselves to be pushed to the margins.

Now, with the Corbyn surge, there is a positive shift. Party membership, fast approaching 400,000 in mid-October, has more than doubled since the general election; on the face of it the influx is made up mostly of left-wing white collar workers and young people. There is a renewed movement for labour movement political representation, although many of those involved do not yet see it that way. The Blairite drive to push the unions out of Labour Party politics has been halted — in fact in some respects the unions have in the last four months played a more pro-active role in the party than ever before in its history.

## BREAK

**The basic reason for the surge must surely be the experience since 2008 of the capitalist crisis and since 2009-10 of the brutal ruling-class offensive called "austerity" — plus the shock of the Tories' election victory, which must also have made many people feel Labour or British politics could not go on as before. In some respects what is happening in the Labour Party is similar to the rise of Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain.**

Despite its limitations so far — which are to be expected — this is an opportunity to break the blockade on minimally left-wing, class-based politics which Blairism, building on Thatcherism, achieved from the mid-1990s. It is an opportunity to shift politics to the left, persuading and changing the ideas of hundreds of thousands and millions of people through energetic campaigning and reasoned debate, and thus make class-struggle socialism a more viable and substantial project than for many years.

We reject the idea that a Corbyn-led Labour Party cannot win a general election. The political "consensus" can be shifted, and it is the job of the left to fight to shift it. We can learn and teach from history: if the majority of the Labour Party had not rejected "austerity" in 1931, immediately leading to electoral catastrophe, there would very probably have been no 1945 government creating the welfare state.

We face many difficulties. The unions have not been transformed. The Blairite party structure and party machine remain in place, for now. Much of the left-wing politics promoted by the Corbyn campaign has been woolly and populist, with little reference to socialism or even the labour movement. The whole left visibly bears the signs of the period we are perhaps coming out of.

We must challenge any notion that, with Corbyn elected,



the job is done. In fact the bigger and more difficult job starts now. Our basic line of activity is to help build up active, democratic, campaigning CLPs and Young Labour groups, and Labour Clubs.

The left will only become a serious force if it goes far beyond the layer that has had disproportionate weight in the central Corbyn campaign — the MPs' researchers and advisers and office people and media operatives, the think tank people, those who float between NGO jobs and Labour Party politics, the young people with full-time trade union jobs, etc.

Building local broad left-wing groups to organise activists in local Labour Parties and labour movements (on the model of e.g. Sheffield, Merseyside, Newcastle, Lewisham), as well as broad local labour movement conferences to discuss the way forward is an urgent task for the left.

## YOUTH

**Youth work is particularly important for renewing the movement and for convincing a new generation of socialists.**

In as many places as possible local Young Labour groups should be centres of left-wing campaigning and discussion, on a constituency basis (or possibly borough basis in parts of London). Student Labour Clubs should be centres of left-wing campaigning and discussion on campuses, and should link up with the National Campaign against Fees and Cuts, anti-cuts struggles, and worker solidarity campaigns.

Labour Young Socialists is an important initiative. It should spread socialist ideas among young people, and be an engine for building strong Young Labour groups and Labour Clubs, and work in Young Labour and Labour Students nationally to argue for such politics. We want to educate young Labour Party members in the traditions and importance of the workers' movement and help make them a force to renew it.

The first task is the fight to revive, democratise and enliven the whole Labour Party and labour movement, in every area and at every level. Without that we cannot meaningfully fight for left-wing policies. Make party conference sovereign, abolish the policy forums; end bans on the socialist left's participation in the party; open up the youth and student structures; and create democratic structures for oppressed groups.

What policies? We support, against the Tories and the Labour right, even the relatively weak and piece-meal reforms being proposed by Corbyn and his close allies; but we argue to deepen and develop Labour's program along the lines of the class-struggle "Emergency Plans" developed by French Trotskyists or our "Workers' Plan for the crisis" — reform demands which boldly answer the most pressing needs of the working class and workers' struggles regardless of the needs and demands of capitalism. The "political economy of the working class", as Marx put it — allocation of resources planned for need, against the logic of the market and profit.

Tax the rich to stop and reverse cuts, rebuild public services; attack inequality; scrap nuclear weapons and cut mili-

tary spending; renationalise privatised industries and services; nationalise the banks; repeal the anti-union laws. We argue for the left to advocate the aim of a government based on and accountable to the labour movement, a workers' government which serves the working class as the Tories serve the bosses. In the movement for such a government we will seek to constitute a consistently revolutionary wing.

We call for Labour councillors to refuse to implement cuts. But the dominant soft-left outlook in the Corbyn surge accepts it as obvious that councillors must make cuts. We won't win that argument with councillors (or many of them, anyway), before we win it with the rank and file. This discussion can stimulate the re-building of active local anti-cuts campaigns.

We defend the right of members to easily select/deselect MPs and councillors as a basic precondition of democracy, of accountability of representatives and of the labour movement's ability to exert pressure on and control over a future Labour government. We call for Labour MPs to take only a worker's wage, and reasonable expenses, and to donate the rest to the party.

## REBUILD

**We seek to rebuild and extend union involvement in the party, in particular by promoting union delegates to local Labour Party structures.**

If the Trade Union Bill passes, hollowing out Labour Party funding and the union link, we will continue to fight for its repeal; and we will fight for the overthrow of the Collins Review arrangements and the restoration or creation of a much more extensive and democratic union-party link.

We must fend off the drive that will come for agreement between the union leaders and the party leaders, or some of them, to halt and reverse progress to the left — of the kind that signalled and prepared retreat in the early 1980s. It is good that most unions supported Corbyn for leader, but it does not mean they have been transformed; that task remains, including by fighting for the unions to promote working-class policies in the Labour Party and by fighting to democratise them. Union democracy is key — without it, no wider transformation of the movement is possible.

Whatever the tactical specifics, we advocate all unaffiliated unions affiliate to the Labour Party, starting most obviously and urgently with the RMT.

Corbyn's record and the fact that he obviously thinks much of the "left" baggage he has carried for decades now unviable mean that many important issues on which we differ from the "left" consensus — particularly Israel-Palestine and Europe, on which the old "left" nationalist consensus has collapsed — are now up for debate.

**We need to up our boldness in argument and seek to coalesce people around us on these issues — alongside and as part of the central task of educating for socialism and winning new people to our ideas and organisation.**



# The sham of Osborne's "Northern Powerhouse"

By John Cunningham

**It is alarming and deeply disturbing to see that some people, many of whom should know better, have swallowed George "high-vis" Osborne's fantasy-speak about building a "Northern Powerhouse"**

This is more amazing when you consider that ever since the Industrial Revolution there has always been a "Northern Powerhouse", and it was the Conservative Party and Thatcher that destroyed it. Without the coal, iron and steel, shipbuilding, engineering and textiles of northern cities like Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield and Newcastle (to which Scotland and South Wales must also be added), Britain would have remained, as in early Tudor times and before, a rather unimportant European offshore island.

Take away the north, and the industrial revolution would have happened somewhere else, with British capitalism ending up a mere shell, reduced to making cuckoo clocks or stuck in an agrarian-based economy. Instead Britain for a time was the most powerful nation on earth, with a huge empire backed up by the largest navy the world had yet seen.

It was no idle boast that Britain was the workshop of the world. Manchester, for a time, became its second wealthiest city. Britain produced over half the world's cotton, coal and iron and totally dominated manufacturing. Most of this came from the north. According to an 1835 survey Britain had 1113 cotton mills. Of those 943 were in Manchester and the surrounding region. If today it has become a cliché to say that you can't buy anything that isn't made in China, think what the situation must have been like in 1870 when Britain produced 46% of the world's manufactured goods. In 2007 Chinese products accounted for 17% of the world's exports.

When Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels penned the *Communist Manifesto* they wrote eloquently and with admiration for the dynamic thrust of capitalism and the way it had transformed the world (as right wing historians are always telling us, as if they are the only ones to have ever read the *Manifesto*!). Yet, it is the north of England, probably more than any other part of the world, that inspired and informed the famous lines "All that is solid melts in the air, all that is holy is profaned". While Marx wrote *Das Kapital* in the scholarly seclusion of the British Library Reading Room in London, its analysis, observations and rich detail are rooted in the Manchester of Friedrich Engels.

Clearly Osborne has latched on to the north at least 150 years too late. In a sense Osborne is talking about a phenomenon that has been around for a long time — regional disparities in development. It's just that idle throwaways about a Northern Powerhouse sound so much "sexier" in our era of sound bites and spin.

Most countries have some kind of "regional" question or problem which arises out of the uneven development of capitalism and the nation state, for example the disparity between the industrialised north of Italy and the agrarian-rural south; the divisions and rivalry between Catalonia and the rest of Spain.

The UK has not been immune to this and there are regional divisions between highland and lowland Scotland, between England and Wales, Cornwall and the rest of England and of course there is the much-discussed north-south divide. Since World War Two there have been various attempts by central government at "engineering" and reviving the economies of the regions, particularly as traditional industry declined. The Midland Bank was encouraged to shift its major operations HQ to Sheffield in the early 1960s (much to the chagrin of its employees who are reported to have stepped off the train in Sheffield and burst into tears); vehicle licensing was moved to Swansea; the DHSS is now based in Newcastle and the BBC has, in recent years, moved some of its operations to Salford.

In 1999, the Labour government established nine Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and talked about devolution and elected assemblies, although looking back it is difficult to see if the RDAs ever made much impact (the Tories killed them off in early 2012). Likewise the proposal for elected regional assemblies went down like a lead balloon in the few places where the waters were tested. One of the problems was that the proposals were muddled and it was never clear what meaningful powers Regional Assemblies would have (if any). The north-south divide remains and no-one, including George Osborne, has ever paused to think why all previ-



L.S Lowry, *Industrial City*, 1945-8

ous attempts at regional development have failed or, best only met with very limited success.

The UK remains very much a country dominated by its capital city and its immediate periphery: Between 2010-14 London created six times as many jobs as in the north west and twice as many as Yorkshire. The dominance of London is a major factor in the disparities between north and south. Part of the rise of UKIP can be accounted for by the way it has exploited the popular perception of a detached London elite running the country for its own benefit (conveniently ignoring Nigel Farage's previous incarnation as a City investor). Whether or not this is true or an oversimplified exaggeration is neither here nor there — it brings in the votes.

Does all this mean that George Osborne, like the Tin Man in *The Wizard of Oz*, has suddenly discovered he really does have a heart? At a speech in Manchester in June 2014, Osborne reeled off a tasty shopping list which was rather short on detail.

The main idea seems to be that the northern cities from Liverpool to Hull will be joined together by developing transport links into a "northern hub" — a neat cliché which can mean just about anything you want. Northern Universities and their research facilities are to become "Catapult Technology Centres"; while power will be devolved through "City Deals"; Liverpool will have a new "Mersey Gateway Bridge" and the "Atlantic Gateway" will "go from being a brilliant concept to a transforming reality".

## CO-OPT

**Cut away the guff and three elements appear central. First, Osborne wants to co-opt and integrate local council decision-making with that coming from Westminster and in doing so reduce councils' ability to make effective local decisions.**

Osborne wants the northern cities to introduce elected mayors. Councils will now receive their income from the local business rates and there will no longer be a block grant from central government which is then "divvied up" among the local services. However, this will probably mean councils will set aside "brownfield sites" for new industrial expansion at the expense of providing new housing. At the Tory Conference Osborne made quite a bit of noise about a new programme of house building, but as yet this contradiction appears not to have registered with him.

Whether or not the local councils can generate enough income from the local businesses they already have or hope to develop remains to be seen. The people of Redcar and Scunthorpe cannot be filled with much optimism in this respect. Given the rate of industrial decline in the last 30 years, the Northern Powerhouse is starting from a very low point. Nor should it be forgotten that all this comes on top of an overall 40% cut in central government grant. The Office of Budget Responsibility predicts that by 2018, across the UK 800,000 public sector jobs will have gone.

In short, the Tories want local councils to take on the responsibility of administering their austerity programme while clouding this aim with a cartload of goodies, most which have minimal substance.

The second element is that Manchester is absolutely central to Osborne's whole strategy. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority consists of ten councils, eight of them

Labour held, and Osborne clearly wants to erode Labour control of this huge conurbation. If he can achieve this then the political landscape of Northern England will have changed dramatically in favour of the Tories.

Thirdly, there is High Speed Two (HS2) — the development of a high speed rail link between London and Manchester with a branch line linking Sheffield and Leeds. HS2 is monumentally expensive and has been a source of controversy since the idea was first mooted. Estimates of the cost vary; currently it is £32 billion, but it could end up costing £80 billion according to one source. The main argument for HS2, incredibly, appears to be that it will shorten the journey time from Manchester to London to about one hour. Quite how this will engender the predicted boosts to productivity, local employment and infrastructure remain to be seen.

While some of the opposition to HS2 comes from the NIM-BYism of the Tory shires and from solid environmental concerns, there are strong arguments that the money could be better spent elsewhere. The New Economic Foundation have produced a report, *High Speed Two: One Track Mind* which debunks most of the government rose-tinted vision, arguing that these kind of "prestige" projects do little to benefit the economy, are monumentally expensive, and rarely achieve any of their goals.

It did not augur well for Osborne that in June this year the plans to electrify and update the TransPennine Express Railway and the Midland Mainline between London and Sheffield had to be dropped because it was too expensive. However Network Rail has announced that this project is now back on track, sort of. Work on the electrification programme has been "unpaused" (more idiotic jargon) and will restart. Even so, full electrification will now miss the original target date of 2020 by three years.

No-one, surely, can object to the building up and strengthening of industry and the creation of jobs. Nor can anyone, particularly those unfortunate souls who regularly travel on the overcrowded, dirty, clapped-out rolling stock of companies like TransPennine, complain about investment in the northern railways. Yet, these developments need to be for the benefit of the people who live in the north of England, not for speculators, hedge funds and the like.

There is a crying need for more manufacturing industry particularly engineering, where workers can earn guaranteed wages, enjoy decent working conditions, and young people will be able to learn a trade. What we do not need is any more growth in the precariat with more "Macjobs", more zero-hour contracts, more part-time work, more call centres.

There need to be guarantees that industrial speculators will not be allowed to "grab and run" — like the US businessman John DeLorean who persuaded the Tory government of the time to part with £77 million of taxpayers' money to establish a car manufacturing plant in Northern Ireland which closed within a year.

If there is to be devolution and the establishment of regional assemblies, then we need to ask why. Devolution for what? So that the responsibility for further cuts can be foisted onto the regions' councils? What can be learned from the Scottish and Welsh experiences with devolution? There is no need for yet another layer of government bureaucracy, even if this is locally based.

The left should be cautious about embracing these ideas until it is clear what is needed and what is not needed. It is imperative that there is a detailed discussion about our responses and what alternatives should be put forward.

**A toothless regional assembly which can only "advise" central government will simply be a waste of time.**

## Commons votes for EVEL

**The House of Commons has voted for "English Votes for English Laws" (EVEL).**

This means that in Parliamentary votes on matters that only affect England, English MPs will have a veto. It is expected that this will make life difficult for future non-Tory governments, since the Tories tend to do better in England than the other nations. It also places enhanced power in the hands of the Speaker, who will adjudicate which issues are "English" and which aren't.

**Beyond that, the change runs the risk of entrenching the emerging divisions between the constituent parts of the United Kingdom.**



# Seumas Milne: ready-made is not best

**The Left**  
By Martin Thomas



**I first met Seumas Milne when he was 21 and we studied economics together in evening classes at Birkbeck College, London, in 1979-81.**

He was affable and sparky: Balliol, Winchester, and an up-bringing as son of the BBC Director-General do something for you.

And unlike most from similar backgrounds, he identified with the left. Like me, he chose Birkbeck because that was the most left-wing economics department in the country.

But he was a Stalinist. A Stalinist of a diehard sort by then rare. He had thrown in his lot with a “left” defined by the USSR and other powers opposed to the USA, not with the working class.

The paper which he would swap with my Trotskyist weekly was the now-long-defunct *Straight Left*, put out by a splinter from the Communist Party which had gone into the Labour Party.

The leading figure in *Straight Left* was Fergus Nicholson, formerly the Communist Party’s student organiser, who adopted the pen-name Harry Steel in tribute to Stalin himself (Stalin, in Russian, meaning “man of steel”). Another *Straight Left*er was Andrew Murray, now chief of staff of the Unite union.

Milne, like Murray, is still a Stalinist. Writing for the

*Guardian*, as he has done for many years, he puts his views in urbane double-negative form, but he is still a Stalinist,

Some Corbyn supporters have defended Milne’s appointment as Labour’s head of communications by saying that Milne “understands our politics inside out” or has political views identical to Corbyn’s.

The praise for Milne is not necessary to defend Corbyn. The Tories who had Andy Coulson (jailed for phone-hacking) as David Cameron’s director of communications, and the New Labour types who had Alastair Campbell (former porn journalist) doing a similar job for Blair, are in no position to complain.

And the praise is unfair to Corbyn. Jeremy Corbyn did move closer to the *Morning Star* from the late 1980s, but, for example, he has defended the rights of Tibet.

## PICKET

**There is another difference. Whatever disputes we may have had with Jeremy Corbyn, in demonstrations and on picket lines we can count on him to be there with us. Although he has long been an MP, he has remained an activist.**

Milne is not like that. Presumably he went to some meetings, demonstrations, and the like in his *Straight Left* days, but apart from that all his input into politics has been “from the top”, from his armchair as a senior *Guardian* journalist or a book-writer. (Before the *Guardian*, he worked for the *Economist* magazine.)



I guess his *Guardian* job makes him appear “ready-made” for the head of communications job, just as Simon Fletcher may have appeared “ready-made” to run the “Leader’s Office” for Corbyn because Fletcher had been chief of staff to Ken Livingstone as mayor of London and a functionary in Ed Miliband’s office, although he had no background in grassroots labour movement activism. Fletcher also has Stalinist politics, derived from the Socialist Action group which, ex-Trotskyist, now presents the Chinese state as a model.

**Operators used to snuggling into the established political and media machines, ideologically imbued with and trained over decades in “top-down” politics, will not serve Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell, and us well in opening up and revitalising the Labour Party.**

# No bans, no proscriptions

By Colin Foster

**“We oppose the infiltration of the Labour Party by the SWP”, or so “a spokesperson for Momentum” has been quoted by the Huffington Post (16 October) as saying.**

Momentum is a new network launched by members of Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour leadership campaign team.

Actually, the “spokesperson for Momentum” had been asked about the Socialist Workers Party (SWP)’s declared intention to join Momentum, not the Labour Party, and so her or his answer was a non-answer.

Worse, a wrong non-answer. The left should unite. Disagreements with SWP members — and regular readers will know that *Solidarity* is second to none in disagreeing with the SWP — are best dealt with by debate along with united activity where we agree. SWP members, indeed the whole SWP, should join the Labour Party now.

Most of the local groups which are now taking the name Momentum are groups of Labour left activists set up as pro-Corbyn caucuses in the leader contest. They operate in the ordinary democratic labour-movement ways, with meetings and votes.

Sometimes a few SWP or Socialist Party members have attended meetings, but without disruption. These Momentum groups have a clear framework and purpose, to help activists revitalise local Labour Parties and Young Labour groups.

On a national level, mistakenly in our view, Momentum has so far been advertised as an autonomous movement open to all, Labour and non-Labour — a pantomime horse group combining the functions of Labour left caucus and “38 Degrees” type internet link-up. We doubt such a catch-all conception is viable.

As advertised, Momentum should be open to anyone on the left to join. However, the problem is not that the SWP can or can’t join. At present no-one (except presumably “the Momentum team”) can join. And in some areas Momentum is taking the form of Facebook pages run by the self-elected.

On the same day as the Huffington Post quote, the Labour left website Left Futures carried an article by former Socialist Party member Phil Burton-Cartledge declaring that “cranky sects”, namely “the SWP and the Socialist Party”, “should be told to sling their hook when they try and get involved” in Momentum.

The article has a witch-hunting tone, but doesn’t say what rules Momentum should impose to exclude SWPers and SPers, or who else should be excluded. (If being “cranky” and “sectarian” is the criterion, then on the evidence of the article



**Socialist Worker’s headline on 15 September**

Burton-Cartledge himself should be number one on the Proscribed List... And some of the people who have wormed themselves into high positions in Corbyn’s Leader’s Office should follow close behind).

It is no wonder the early days of Momentum see some floundering. Its organisers are improvising in hectic and unexpected circumstances. Grass-roots activists can help get things straight in four ways:

- By building local Labour Momentum groups which are open, democratic, and have a clear Labour-focused remit.
- By opposing bans and proscriptions. If the SWP want to join the Labour Party, they should be welcome. If they don’t, then still Labour Momentum groups should seek to work with them on issues of common concern.
- By dealing with disagreements neither by pretending they don’t exist, nor by anathemas, but by debate.
- **By asking for Momentum to set up a clear democratic structure as soon as possible, so that activists themselves can decide on the most effective way to organise.**

# SWP snared in Scotland

By Anne Field

**The SWP in Scotland adopted a distinctly sniffy attitude towards the Corbyn campaign.**

According to an SWP leaflet distributed at a Corbyn rally in Glasgow, “while we should wish Jeremy Corbyn well [thanks!], we urgently need a socialist alternative to Labour.”

Corbyn’s victory was dismissed by the SWP as a matter of little account for Scotland: “Scottish Labour has elected an uninspiring new leader in Kezia Dugdale. Corbynmania hasn’t passed it by, but it looks set to suffer another crushing defeat next May.”

The focus, again, had to be on overcoming “divisions on the Scottish left” in order to create a “united electoral challenge to the SNP and the Labour Party” in 2016. But as the SWP itself knows, its calls for a “united electoral challenge” are dead in the water.

Sheridan-Solidarity will be standing its own candidates. And the newly launched RISE — “Respect, Independence, Socialism, Environmentalism”, a continuation of the ISG-RIC “tradition” — will not ally with Sheridan.

In fact, RISE will not ally with the SWP or the Socialist Party either. Both were banned from its founding conference.

All that the SWP can look forward to as a “united electoral challenge” is an “alliance” with the Socialist Party under the TUSC banner and an even more lamentable electoral performance in 2016 than in 2015.

This is no more than what the SWP deserves.

The SWP’s attitude towards the Labour Party (and the broader labour movement) has consistently been one rooted in build-the-revolutionary-party sectarianism. Corbyn’s victory has now put that sectarianism into the lime-light.

In the run-up to last year’s referendum the SWP ditched its longstanding opposition to Scottish independence. Instead, it sought to ingratiate itself with independence-supporters by adopting a vicarious Scottish nationalism.

The sole beneficiary of that accommodation was the SNP. While the SWP boasted of recruiting “dozens of people”, the SNP recruited tens of thousands. While SWP candidates struggled to achieve even a triple-digit vote in the general election, the SNP won 56 seats.

**When it comes to organisations that “the left in Scotland can’t look to for a way forward”, the SWP is truly in a league of its own.**

• A full version of this article is at: [bit.ly/1kN01pO](http://bit.ly/1kN01pO)



# SNP nationalism no answer to Trade Union Bill

By Dale Street

**The SNP will be moving an amendment to the Tories' Trade Union Bill that the Bill does not apply to Scotland.**

As is the case with everything else, the SNP's attitude is determined by, and subordinate to, its goal of independence for Scotland.

One of the worst aspects of the Bill is its requirement that trade union members "opt into" paying the political levy. It would slash the money available to unions to engage in political campaigning. With 13 trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party, it would also have a devastating knock-on effect on trade union support for the Labour Party.

But the motion on the Trade Union Bill passed by the SNP Trade Union Group (TUG) earlier this year and submitted to the recent SNP annual conference did not even mention this element of the Bill. This is not surprising.

When an SNP TUG member spoke at a meeting of the Unite United Left (Scotland) shortly after the general election, the one SNP TUG policy she was able to specify was: to achieve the disaffiliation of trade unions in Scotland from the Labour Party.

The Trade Union Bill will not result in disaffiliations. But it will drastically impact on trade union political campaigning and the Labour-unions link. The Tories are doing the SNP's job for them!

In announcing the SNP policy "to ask that Scotland is excluded from the entire Bill", SNP Minister Roseanna Cunningham explained that the Bill would "lead to greater confusion among employees."

It would "directly impact on Scottish business and especially our devolved public services" and was therefore not "a constructive platform upon which we can pursue our ambitions for Scottish workers."

The SNP seems to have fairly modest ambitions for Scottish workers. The Em-

ployment "Policy Base" on the SNP website does not even mention workers' rights' and trade unions. And the SNP's White Paper on Independence, produced for last year's referendum, made no mention of repealing any of the Tories' anti-union laws in an independent Scotland.

As a nationalist party, the SNP does not and cannot call for a mobilisation of the target of the Trade Union Bill: the UK-wide labour movement – the trade unions and the Labour Party, which, however imperfectly, gives political expression to their interests.

Echoing the theme that the Bill is bad for Scottish business, the SNP TUG's own webpage declares: "The SNP believes that good employment practices are a key contributor to economic competitiveness and social justice. The SNP are firmly opposed to the UK government's Trade Union Reform Bill."

## DIVISIVE

**The SNP's half-hearted opposition to the Trade Union Bill confirms the poisonously divisive nature of nationalism (all nationalisms, not just Scottish nationalism).**

When the Labour Party rejects the SNP's divisive proposal and the Tories use their majority to push through the Bill, the SNP will use this as another demagogic argument for independence for Scotland. Mission accomplished!

For the SNP, the need for a labour movement mobilisation against the Tories' class warfare counts for nothing in comparison to an opportunity to ritualistically denounce "Westminster rule" and "oppose" the Trade Union Bill as "confusing" for Scottish workers and bad for Scottish business.

**And what credibility can the SNP have as the self-proclaimed champion of workers' rights when its Finance Secretary, John Swinney, has crossed PCS picket lines at Holyrood – along with Tories and Lib-Dems – declaring that it was his "duty" to do so?**

# Support FE strikes on 10 November

By Gemma Short

**Workers in Further Education will strike on 10 November after college bosses have imposed a pay freeze.**

As report in *Solidarity* 381, both UCU, representing lecturers, and Unison, representing support staff, have voted for strikes as college workers have seen their pay decrease in real terms for six years.

The pay freeze comes in the context of ever tightening budgets for FE colleges, with many colleges having already gone through may

rounds of course closures and redundancies.

The UCU FE executive passed a motion on 17 October which, as well as setting the date for the strike, called for a protest at Parliament and at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills on the day, and protests in other parts of the country.

The motion also sought to ensure that members can retain control of the dispute by mandating the executive to reconvene to discuss the next steps and review negotiations.

Control over the dispute by members will be essen-



tial, not only to hold negotiators to account but also to activate and involve members who have been demobilised by a series of defeats.

**Students and other**

**trade unionists should rally around to support FE strikers on 10 November, and build a campaign around FE funding.**

# Teachers take action on workload

By Patrick Murphy

**As the first half-term of the school year ended, around 23 October, there was a sharp spike in the number of schools where teachers are taking industrial action to fight for better conditions.**

Already it looks like two significant school disputes against excessive workload and bullying managements have been won. Three others remain live.

At Winterbourne School in South Gloucester the NUT (National Union of Teachers) announced six strike days, but after three days the school sought negotiations and then agreed to many of the union's demands.

Meanwhile in Wakefield NUT and NASUWT members voted to strike against the imposition of unreasonable workload and the reemergence of a bullying culture from senior management, including threats of suspensions of union activists. Just before the start of the half-term holiday it looked like the school head-

teacher has resigned and the unions' concerns will be addressed.

In Greenwich NUT members at John Roan School have voted for strikes to take place on 3 and 10 November against excessive monitoring and workload. More action is planned if this does not shift the management and picket lines are planned.

NUT members at Listerdale Primary in Rotherham have started a campaign of action short of strike action which, again, has been triggered by unacceptable workload demand and the sudden suspension by the unelected Children's Trust which now runs the local authority.

It is extremely positive to see a flurry of action to defend teachers from increased workload and bullying management culture. Together these problems are responsible for the loss of tens of thousands of people from the job.

We need to see this spike in resistance spread and grow into an unstoppable tide if we are to stem the flood of teachers out of the

## Alfreton Grange Arts College strike



By Liam Conway

**On 20 October I joined more than 20 teachers on a picket line at Alfreton Grange Arts College, Derbyshire.**

This was the second strike day at the college after management introduced a nine period day and other draconian measures which are increasing workload, de-skilling teachers and damaging the education of children.

classroom.

**A good start would be these disputes being publicised loudly and persistently by the teacher unions. The NUT's**

Alfreton Grange is currently a local authority school under Derbyshire County Council. However, they have come under the influence of an academy group from Nottinghamshire, Torch Academy Trust who seek to raise "standards" at the expense of staff welfare.

**Thankfully the teachers at Alfreton Grange are in no mood to succumb to Torch's bullying tactics, and more strikes are planned after half term.**

**Teacher magazine should lead with news of these disputes and the Union's training for reps should be built around learning from no spreading these examples.**

# Transport strikes on the horizon in London

By Ollie Moore

**Two Rail, Maritime, and Transport workers' union (RMT) ballots in London which closed last week have delivered huge votes for strikes.**

Drivers on the Piccadilly Line on London Underground have voted by an 85% majority for strikes,

and by an even higher margin for action short of strikes, in a dispute over the breakdown of industrial relations with local management, brought to a head by the recent sacking of driver Paul Okoro on spurious and unfair grounds.

Staff on the Docklands Light Railway (DLR), part of the Transport for London aegis but operated by a pri-

vate contractor (Keolis Amey Docklands), have also voted to strike, by a 92% majority, in a wide ranging dispute over a number of issues including management bullying.

An RMT statement said: "Our members on DLR are furious at the way that Keolis/Amey are trying to bulldoze in some of the worst working practices and con-

ditions that we associate with the operations of the most cheapskate and anti-union companies in the transport sector, and that anger is reflected in these ballot results.

**"We will not sit back and allow this aggressive and bullying culture to develop on this key part of London's transport network."**





## Labour must fight to stop tax credit cuts

By Matthew Thompson

**Government plans to make cuts to tax credit have been stymied and delayed by the House of Lords.**

The Lords narrowly passed a motion from Labour peer Patricia Hollis which calls on the government to respond to the Institute of Fiscal Studies research that three million families would lose over £1,000 a year. The motion says the Lords will not approve the cuts until the government delivers a “scheme for full transitional protection for all low-income families and individuals currently receiving tax credits...” The government wanted to use the cuts to save around £4.4 billion, or just over a third of the £12 billion they want to take out of the welfare budget.

We have no brief for the unelected rump of hereditary peers, appointed life peers and Church of England bishops. Having said that, it is amusing to see the Tories rattled. An indignant Cameron told the House of Lords it had overstepped its constitutional role by interfering in the fiscal policies of the government.

Unfortunately the House of Lords motion will probably

only slow down cuts. And, the Labour position, as posed in Hollis’ motion, is too ambiguous; it does not oppose the cuts outright.

Tory backbenchers had also opposed the cuts. That stems from electoral calculations by MPs in marginal seats (it is significant that the measure has been introduced early in this Parliament) and the fact that it cuts across attempts to re-brand the Tories as the “workers’ party”, standing up for “strivers”.

There is of course a left-wing case to be made against tax credits — a state subsidy to employers paying low wages — just as there is against the millions of pounds of public money handed to buy-to-let landlords in Housing Benefit for charging private tenants extortionate amounts for often substandard accommodation. In both cases the answer is to raise the social ground level — by raising the minimum wage to a real living wage and scrapping zero-hours contracts and lower rates for young workers, and by introducing rent controls — rather than simply withdrawing support as part of an ideological drive to reduce the role of the state, as the Tories are doing.



Nonetheless, right now, while the Tories have been weakened, Labour needs to campaign to force a complete u-turn on cuts to tax credits.

## Steel crisis: meet need, not profit!

By Ann Field and Luke Hardy

**270 more steel jobs are directly at risk after Tata Steel announced plans to “mothball” its Dalzell and Clydebridge plants.**

Tata is also closing its plants in Scunthorpe with the loss of 900 jobs. In Redcar 2200 jobs are to go at SSI, and a further 1800 are under threat at Caparo in the Midlands.

These job losses are part of a bigger wave of steel job losses in Europe and elsewhere — including China. These losses are a product

of the unregulated and globalised nature of steel production and supply.

China and other major steel-producing countries (such as South Korea, India and Russia) have massively increased steel output in recent years, while global demand has been stagnant or declining.

The result is a typical capitalist crisis of overproduction. But, in the context of a globalised economy, it is a crisis on an international scale: in line with the logic of capitalism, excess steel output is sold cut-price (“dumped”) in the international marketplace.

The government, influenced by a mixture of neoliberal ideology, hostility to unionised steel workers and an opportunist relationship with the Chinese capitalism, has been entirely inactive. Labour’s Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell have joined with the unions and the *Daily Mirror* to launch a Save Our Steel campaign. In Scotland Labour is pursuing a contradictory campaign (see box).

The “answer” to globalisation — whether it be in the steel industry or any other industry — is not nationalism.

Putting the blame on a particular country (e.g. China), demanding controls on imports from that country, and retreating behind tariff barriers, national borders and trade wars, won’t solve the situation.

This is the often unspoken “logic” at the heart of the Scottish National Party’s demand for independence.

The rhetoric against Chinese “dumping” of steel has started to become chauvinistic even from parts of the left.

But the socialist answer to the anarchy of capitalist production is not economic



autarky, when states and nations try to wall themselves off from the world market and strive for economic self-sufficiency, but the socialisation of the means of production. That means democratically planning; production to meet need not profit; work-sharing with no loss of pay; and environment-friendly production processes.

Steel is a vital resource necessary for house building and renewing infrastructure. Unions and Labour should be campaigning and organising for workers’ control and demo-

cratic public ownership. It should be a part of an international campaign which brings together steelworkers and their unions to fight for such demands, backed up by industrial action.

The labour movement unites workers across national borders. Nationalism divides workers according to their national identities.

**In the fight to save steelworkers’ jobs – whatever their country, and whatever their national identity – the labour movement internationally must take the lead.**

**The Scottish Labour Party (SLP) has responded to steel job losses with a confusing range of demands on the SNP government:**

- Use public procurement powers to ensure that Scottish infrastructure projects place orders with the two plants.
- Support short-time working (but Tata, not the Scottish government, is the employer).
- Temporarily bring the plants into public owner-

ship (but why only “temporarily”?).

- Cut Tata’s energy costs by putting pressure on Scottish Power and SSE (but why can’t we all have cheaper electricity?);
- Consult with “workers and the industry” to develop a government-led steel strategy (but why involve Tata if the industry is to be taken into public ownership?);
- Provide support for those losing jobs (implying other demands will fail).

The SLP also demands action because of the “iconic” status of the Scottish steel industry. This is not a persuasive argument. Razor-gangs in Glasgow on a Saturday night also once enjoyed an “iconic” status. However confused the demands the SLP is trying to protect jobs in the residual Scottish steel industry. Local CLPs have also been campaigning on the streets to save steelworkers’ jobs.

Meanwhile a govern-

ment-led taskforce has been set up to try to find an alternative buyer for the plants. According to Nicola Sturgeon, “nothing is off the table”, including public ownership.

The SNP, Scotland’s patriotic party, can hardly point to its record of supporting Scottish steel jobs. In 2012 it awarded all steel contracts for the new Forth crossing to China, Poland and Spain.

**Not a single one went to Dalzell or Clydebridge.**